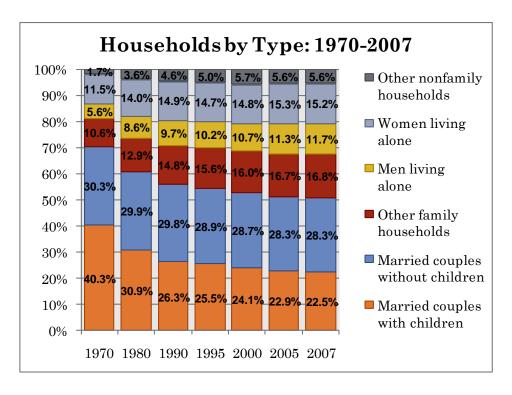
## Maine State Data Center News: Census Report on America's Families

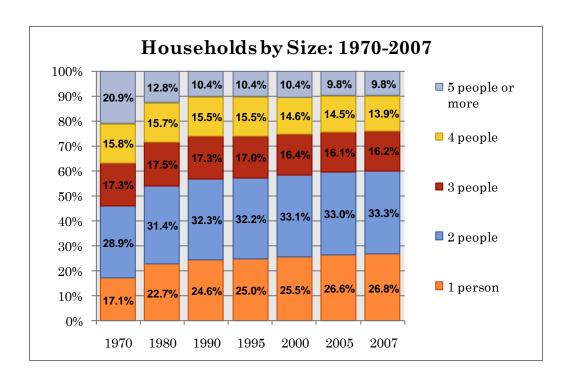
A new Census report, *America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2007*, details the dramatic changes in the composition of American households over the past few decades. A combination of demographic, economic and social factors has resulted in smaller households, smaller families and fewer "traditional" families consisting of a married couple with children. These changes have profound implications for the way Maine people interact, live and solve problems together. They also present an opportunity to create public policies that encourage denser, more efficient land-use planning.

In 1970, the number of U.S. households consisting of families outnumbered those consisting of non-families by more than 5 to 1: 81% of all households were family households; 19% were non-family households. Nearly four decades later, in 2007, those percentages have converged significantly. The percentage of family households has fallen to 67%, now outnumbering non-family households by just 2 to 1.

The drop in the proportion of family households was almost entirely due to a decline in "traditional" households – married couples living together with their own children – which fell from 40% in 1970 to 23% in 2007.

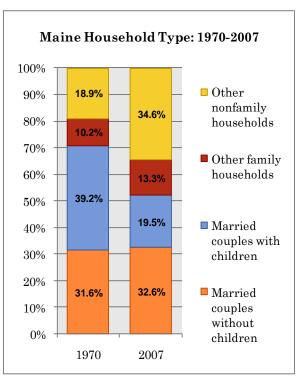


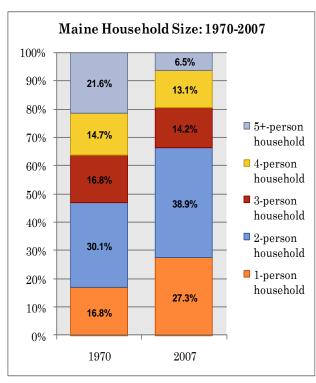
The effect of these household composition changes is that households have become smaller. With fewer traditional families, the percentage of large households – those with 5 or more people – declined by half, from 21% in 1970 to 10% in 2007. And the number of one-person households increased substantially. The average number of people per household now stands 16% lower than it did in 1970, at 2.6.



In Maine, the story has been similar. In 1970, 81% of Maine households consisted of families; as of 2007, family households make up 65% of all households.

Average household size, too, has declined, from 3.2 persons per household in 1970 to 2.4 today. During this same period, large households of five or more people declined from 22% in 1970 to 7% and single person households increased from 17% to 27%.





These changes – smaller families and households, and a smaller proportion of households with children – are contributing to a changing Maine. As communities become less dense, the way we view and use our land and open space changes. It puts a premium on space for housing development. Likewise, as open public space becomes scarcer, its importance is highlighted and the trade-off between development and conservation is accentuated.

A spreading-out of our population also creates the need to build and maintain further-reaching infrastructure including roads and public water. Municipalities are burdened with higher costs to maintain adequate services, putting pressure on property tax payers to support this growth.

Finally, the nature of our communities is affected. Fewer families and more people living alone have profound implications to the way Maine people interact, live, and solve problems together. This challenge presents both a need and an opportunity to create public policies that encourage denser, more efficient land-use planning.